The Righteous Man's Support.

A

SERMON

Preach'd before

Her Majesty,

On WEDNESDAY *June* 14th, 1693.

BIENG

The Day of the Monthly FAST.

By *R. LUCAS* D. D.

Vicar of St. *Stephen's Coleman-street.*

Published by Her Majesty's Special Command.

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PSALM CXII. 7.

He ſhall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, truſting in the Lord.

THIS *Pſalm* preſents us with the *Character* and *Bleſſings* of a righteous Man: His *Bleſſings*, according to the ſtile of the Old Teſtament, which we muſt exalt by the Spirit of the New, are Riches, Victory, long Life, a flouriſhing Poſterity, an honourable and laſting Memory. His *Character* is made up of a Conſtellation of Vertues; Firſt the Fear of God as the Fountain and Principle of all the reſt, then a delight in his Commandments, Diſcretion, Juſtice, Mercy, Beneficence, Bounty; and laſtly, Faith or Confidence in God, which unites his *Character* and his *Bleſſings* together; for as it is deſcrib'd in my Text, I can hardly tell whether it partakes more of the one or the other, whether I ought to call it the Vertue or the Happineſs of the Righteous Man; *He ſhall not be afraid*, &c. In handling theſe words, I'll obſerve this Method.

1. I'll make ſome Reflection upon the commonneſs and unavoidableneſs of Evil which is

ſuppoſed in my Text, the *righteous man* not being exempt from *Evil Tidings*.

2. I'll ſhow you that the Favour and Patronage of God is the only Support and Comfort of Man againſt Evil. This is that which fortifies the righteous Man in my Text againſt Evil Tydings, his heart is *fixed*, truſting in the Lord.

3. I'll conclude with an Exhortation to Righteouſneſs, as that alone which can entitle us to the Favour of God, and warrant our Confidence in him.

1. Of the commonneſs and unavoidableneſs of evil. Were there no ſin to merit evil; no God, or none concern'd to inflict it, yet conſidering the ſtate and nature of this World, a wiſe man could not promiſe himſelf much from it. All things without us are mixt, empty, uncertain, tranſitory, and we our ſelves conſiſt of mortal Bodies, and mutable Minds, Diſeaſes infects the one, and Paſſions the other, ſo that errour and ignorance, baſiles and diſappointments, loſſes, changes, ſickneſs, death, reign every where, diſquiet and diſturb every ſtate. But if we carry our thoughts a little further, if we conſider what variety of Evils is neceſſary to exerciſe and train up Vertue; to inform Man, and vindicate the Sanctity and Juſtice of God;

God; If we look upon the World as the Theatre of God and Man, on which the *Wiſe man* too often acts his Miſtakes and Follies, the *Fool* and *Sinner* his Luſt, Rage, Avarice, Ambition, Subtilty Cruelty, Hypocriſy, Bigottry, and the like. And God delights to diſplay his Wiſdom, Power and Goodneſs in the various Scenes of Lovingkindneſs, Righteouſneſs, and Judgment, *Jer.* 9. If, I ſay, we conſider all this, we ſhall be apt to wonder, why Evils are not more numerous and more grievous then they are. Man when full and at eaſe, when ſtanding on an high, on heaps of Honours and Offices, Dignities and Preferments, is a proud, inſolent, vain, ſenſual, unthinking thing; how many Diſgraces, Mortifications, Revolutions, are neceſſary to make this poor Creature know God and himſelf, to make him humble, modeſt, wiſe and vertuous; a lively Image of this we have in the people of *Iſrael*, *Iſa.* 2.7,8. *Their Land is full of ſilver and gold, neither is there any end of their Treaſure; their Land alſo is full of Horſes, neither is there any end of their Chariots.* And what was the natural reſult of this, even what follows in the next words of the Prophet, *Their Land alſo is full of Idols, they worſhip the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers*

have made. And this was a wantonneſs not to be cured, but by afflictions; nor could any thing effectually convince them of the vanity of Stocks and Stones, or the need they ſtood in of the living and true God, but Calamities and Diſtreſſes. And as theſe are often neceſſary to convert a Sinner, ſo are they no leſs neceſſary to train up a Convert, and perfect even a Righteous Man; even theſe have their Droſs, which cannot be purg'd but with fire; there is *Remiſneſs* in themſelves, *Connivance* and *Compliance* with the ſins of others; there is their *Carnal Diffidence* and *Worldly Politicks*; ah too too remote all from the Simplicity, the Zeal, and Faith of a Chriſtian. In one word, good Men too often adhere too much to the World, and have too much fondneſs for the Intereſt and Eaſe of the Body, and are far from being ſufficiently mortified to the *Deſigns* and *Arts* of the World, and therefore God finds himſelf obliged, ever and anon, to imbitter their outward Comforts, to ſhatter thoſe falſe Props they are apt to lean on, to embroil and entangle them in their Councils, that they may learn to cleave to him with a more perfect heart, and to live as becomes the Followers of Jeſus, not by ſubtilty or ſight, but Faith. For

theſe

theſe and a great many other reaſons Judgment, as St. *Peter* obſerveth, doth ſometimes *begin at the Houſe of God*; and if ſo, what ſhall be the end of *thoſe that obey not the Goſpel*, if the *righteous ſcarcely be ſaved*, if they eſcape as through the fire, *where ſhall the ſinner and ungodly appear.* A thought which ought very ſenſibly to affect our Souls this day. I am afraid, pray God it be without ground, that God may take up the ſame Complaint againſt this Nation now, which he did againſt *Judea* once, *Ezek.* 5. 6. *She hath changed my judgments into wickedneſs more then the nations, and my ſtatutes more then the countries that are round about her.* I am afraid, in deſpight of all thoſe Mercies God hath heaped upon us, in defiance of thoſe advantages in Church and State we enjoy above our neighbouring Nations, if we be compared with them, we ſhall be found to equal the Luxury and Intemperance of one, the Pride and Vanity of another, to exceed the worſt in Luſt and Wantonneſs; and to compleat all, 'tis doubted, whether we have not outdone our ſelves in Inconſtancy, Ingratitude, Falſhood, Hypocriſy, Faction, and Diviſions. May this be only a vain, tho' well-meaning Jealouſie? But if it be

true

true, then I am ſure, ſhould God extinguiſh our Luſt and Wantonneſs, by Plague and Peſtilence, ſhould he reduce our Pride and Luxury by Poverty and Famine, ſhould he put an end to our Diviſions, as he did once to *Jeruſalem's*, by a Civil and Forreign Sword ranging from North to South, ſhould he finally ſuffer Perſecutions, not to be parallel'd in former Ages, to tare up by the Roots our Holy Religion, our Religion ſo ſcandalouſly betrayed, and abandoned by our Hearts and Animoſities, ſo vilely diſhonoured and blaſphemed by Sins and Immoralities too too National, all that we ſhould have to ſay, would be, *Righteous art thou O Lord, and juſt are thy Judgments.* This is what our ſins have deſerved; this is what our contempt of Mercies hath provoked thee to.

I have made theſe Reflections on the commonneſs and unavoidableneſs of Evil for theſe Reaſons.

1. That if God bleſs us with ſuch an Iſſue of Affairs, as we have this day earneſtly prayed for, our Gratitude may be enlarged, and the goodneſs of God, which we have ſo little ground to pretend to, may even melt us into humble Joys, holy Thanks, and devout Praiſes.

2. To diſpoſe us to modeſt and rational Expectations;

pectations; to paſs through crouds of Evils on the right hand and on the left, like *Iſrael* through the Read Sea, when the Water ſtood on heaps on both ſides, and not to be touch'd by them, ſeems to me the greater Miracle of the two: To hope therefore for an uninterrupted Succeſs, to be willing to bear no Inconveniencies, to meet with no Diſappointments, to grow diſcontented and mutinous if we be not preſently plac'd out of the very reach of Evil, this is a petulancy, a wantonneſs, that becomes not *Sinners*, ſhall I ſay, no, not *Men*, not *Mortals*.

Laſtly, Theſe Reflections ſerve to teach us, that, if Evils, and great ones too, be one time or other unavoidable, then 'tis the Wiſdom and Duty of all, by an holy and upright Life, or by Repentance and Reformation to ſecure their Intereſt in the favour of God, for which is my ſecond General.

2. This alone is the Comfort and Support of Man againſt Evils.

I need not prove that he can have no *other*. For what can he confide in, his Treaſure? this may ſoon be exhauſted, or it may awaken the Avarice and Ambition of a powerful Enemy

my, as *Hezekiah*'s did the King of *Babylon*'s, and so instead of being a Defence, prove the occasion of his ruin. Can he confide in power? alas he knows that when this is grown too big to fall by any other hands, it generally falls by its own. Can he finally confide in worldly Wisdom? alas a thousand unexpected Accidents, and unobserved latent Circumstances, cross and frustrate this, and render the *Achitophel*'s of this World not only unfortunate, but often contemptible too. *Let not therefore the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understands and knoweth God, that he is the Lord who executeth loving kindness and judgment upon the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord,* Jer. 9. 23, 24. To promote which frame of Spirit, so acceptable to God, and advantagious to you, be pleased to consider these three or four things.

1. He who is assured of the Favour of God, is free from the worst of Evils.
2. God is able to support and reward his Servants.
3. He's able to prevent the Evil which threatens

threatens them, or deliver them out of those they are in.

4. He'l certainly do what is best for them.

1. He who is assured of the Favour and Patronage of God, is thereby freed from the worst and greatest of Evils. To be abandoned here on Earth by the Divine Spirit, to be given up to sin and a reprobate sence, and after all to be cast into Hell, a Region of inextinguishable Flames; these are Evils which make men truly and eternally miserable; but 'tis our comfort these are Evils which only God can inflict; only an angry God can make us truly miserable. As to Man, what *Zeba* and *Zalmunna* said of *Jether*, Judg. 8. 21. *As is the man so is his strength*; may be applied to all the Sons of Men, his strength is trifling, and therefore his anger too. He's arm'd like peevish *Wasps* with *Buz* and little *Stings*, not like God with *Thunder* and fatal *Bolts*; and therefore his slight Wounds can only trouble and disquiet, not ruin us. For what can he do? His *Tongue can wound our Reputation*, or his Arm our *Body*; *he can plunder and rifle us of our Estate and Fortune*; He can deprive us of our *Liberty*, and of *Life* it self; not to take

notice that he can do none of these things unless God permit. What doth all this amount to? *He can wound our Reputation: i.e.* he can fight with the Air; for Reputation is but popular Breath: he can fasten imaginary wounds upon an imaginary Man; for Reputation is generally nothing else but the Picture of a Man drawn by the Fancies and Opinions of the Vulgar. *He can rob us of our Estates*; that is, he can clear our way to Heaven of all that Rubbish which doth but trash and clog us in our Journey. *He can deprive us of our Liberty*; that is, he can confine us to the happy necessity of entertaining our selves with wise and holy Thoughts, and of being entertained by heaven: Finally, *He can kill the Body*; that is,he can throw down these Mud-walls, which will be built up of Marble; he can deliver us from the Troubles and Evils of this Life, and send us the speediest way into the Joys and Glories of a better. This is all vain Man can do. For no violence can wound the Soul, no Calumnies can blast our Innocence, or sully our Integrity; what we are, that we shall be, whatever Man represents us, no Persecutions, no Alarms can rob us of the Peace of Conscience, and Joy of the Holy

ly Ghoſt; no ravenous Hands can ſeize upon our heavenly Treaſure; the Crown of Life is held faſt by the right hand of the Almighty, and no force, no ambition can invade it. I will ſum up this Argument in the words of our Saviour, *Luke* 12. 5. *And I ſay unto you my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but I'll forewarn you whom you ſhall fear, fear him who after he hath kill'd the body, hath power to caſt into hell, yea, I ſay unto you, fear ye him.* Were all this thorowly fix'd in the minds of Men, it would be an effectual means to extinguiſh ſelfiſhneſs, cowardize, and hypocriſy, to awaken a neceſſary zeal for our Religion and Country, and to revive the honour of our Nation; for no Man who believes this will part with his Integrity to preſerve or increaſe his Fortune, or ſacrifice the favour of God to the fear of Man, or of any Evil whatever. Eſpecially if he conſider,

2ly, That God is able to ſupport and reward his Servants. Now God ſupports us various ways; partly by his gracious Promiſes, partly by diſpenſing Evils by ſuch degrees, and with ſuch a mixture of good, as not to ſuffer us to be oppreſſed and overwhelmed by

them; and partly by fortifying us by his Spirit, in proportion to the danger and difficulty of the Conflict he calls us to. What the force and vertue of all this put together is, may be inferred from the Victories and Triumphs of good Men in all ages, over all sorts of afflictions, amidst the Persecutions and Insultings of Enemies, the Ingratitude and Perfidiousness of Friends; in Poverty, Reproach, Imprisonment, Sickness, and Death it self, they have maintain'd their ground, preserved their Integrity, and appeared to all great and illustrious. A good Cause and a good Conscience, are proof against all Calamities: The Sword of the Spirit, and the Shield of Faith, will sufficiently protect us against all the Darts and Onsets of the Enemy. I do not by all this imagine that the Trials of the righteous Man are void of trouble and affliction, that his Contention is without sweat or toil, his Wounds without smart, or his heart utterly untouch'd by those Passions which harress and oppress others; but only that he's not broken nor dejected like the Sinner and Hypocrite; that he's never destitute wholly of inward Comfort, nor ever casts away his hope in God. Such is the Description the *Psalmist* gives us of his

own

own Faith, or the ſtate of his Soul under Trials: *Nevertheleſs though I am ſometimes afraid, yet put I my truſt in thee. My heart and my fleſh faileth me, but God is the ſtrength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* Nor can it yet be denied, but that ſome times, ſuch is the ſtrength of Faith, ſuch the tranſport of Love, ſuch the confidence of Hope, ſuch the luxuriancy and joy of the holy Spirit, that the pleaſure of a good Man in the midſt of his Sufferings, doth infinitely outweigh and exceed his Pain and Sorrow; but this I doubt is but a very rare Caſe: and therefore God puts us often in mind, that the Afflictions of this preſent moment, when he calls us to them, procure for us an eternal weight of glory: and our Saviour when he pronounceth thoſe happy whom the World generally pronounceth miſerable, doth it with an eye to their Reward: *Bleſſed are ye poor, for yours is the Kingdom of Heaven: Bleſſed are ye that weep now, for ye ſhall laugh.* Rejoyce and triumph to all Eternity. *Bleſſed are ye when men ſhall hate you, and perſecute you, &c. Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven.* Good God! why ſhould we fear that Evil which leads us to ſuch an happy end, or rather

rather why ſhould we call it Evil, which recommends us to God's favour here, and greater degrees of glory hereafter. Methinks were we thorowly perſwaded of this, our heart, like the wiſe man's in *Solomon*, ſhould chooſe *to dwell in the houſe of mourning*, and we ſhould prefer the advantages of Afflictions before the ſlumbers of Peace, the ſoftneſs and luxury of Wealth, or the falſe and empty glitterings of worldly power and glory, when deſtitute of Vertue. But let me not be miſunderſtood, I have not magnified Sufferings, as if we were to be fond of them, when we may with a good Conſcience decline them. Whoever throws himſelf upon Evils, when God points him out a way to eſcape them, deſerts and betrays the Providence of God, forfeits all pretenſion to Divine aſſiſtance, and ſuffers like a Fool, not a Martyr. St. *Paul* when he wiſht his Auditors his Faith, did not wiſh them his Bonds too; and St. *Peter*, how warm ſoever his temper, how bold ſoever his Faith was, durſt not throw himſelf upon the Waves, without his Maſter's expreſs Command. Nor have I dwelt ſo long on the cloudy ſide of that *Pillar*, under whoſe Conduct I hope this Nation is this day, as if there were not a bright one too.

too. No; my only deſign herein was to ſet the World in a good light before you, to invite you to wiſe and ſober Thoughts, and equally to prepare you for every Fortune; for whoever can bear Adverſity with courage and conſtancy, will enjoy Proſperity with modeſty and moderation; he that is not daſtardly and dejected under the one, will never be wanton and inſolent, or forgetful of God in the other; and he whoſe Will is reſigned up to God, whoſe Soul is humbly prepared to meet whatever Evil God in his wiſdom, juſtice or goodneſs ſhall think fit to lay upon him, is not only beſt fitted for Succeſs, but hath alſo the beſt title to it. Let us therefore paſs on to the third Conſideration.

3dly, God is able to prevent impending Evils, or diſperſe the preſent; to doubt this is an approach towards Atheiſm: For to call into queſtion God's Omnipotence, or Omniſcience, is in effect to call into queſtion his Being, ſince he cannot be God without both. But if he be Omnipotent and Omniſcient, then it plainly follows, *that he doth whatſoever he pleaſeth in heaven and in earth; and no thought of his can be hindred.* Nor ſhall we find it difficult to aſcribe this to God, if we conſider that he

he is without beginning, and gives beginning to all things: For from hence must follow these two things.

1. That all the Power and Wisdom scattered through the whole Creation, if it could be combined and united, would bear no proportion to that which is originally and essentially in God, since all created Perfections are only some faint Reflections of the Divine Brightness, some thin sprinklings of his inexhaustible store.

2. That all created Beings depend upon him, and are subject to his Will; when therefore he commands, *The stars in their courses fight against* Sisera, *and the river* Kishon *sweeps them away.* Fire, Hail, and Vapours, Storms and Tempests, Earthquakes and Inundations, Famine and Plague, Sickness and Death obey his Voice, the hearts of Kings, and the hearts of the Multitude too are in his hands, in vain therefore is Counsel, in vain is Strength against the Lord. He wants no Instruments to destroy, none to save. Thus have I briefly evinced the Omnipotence of God; if we consider the Exercise and Administration of it, God commonly governs by fix'd and stated Rules, and effects his Designs by ordinary and usual means.

means. Yet ſometimes he takes pleaſure in humbling the Proud, and reſcuing the Diſtreſſed, by extraordinary and unaccountable ways; ways that beſpeak God the Contriver of them; ways that are evident Demonſtrations of a Divine Power and Wiſdom. And as he doth this often by unaccomptable ways, ſo often at very unexpected times too; when the proud man is in the height of ſucceſs and ſecurity; when the humble man hath nothing almoſt to expect, but a Miracle, nothing to truſt to but an act of Omnipotence, then God breaks in with ſudden ruin on the one, and deliverance to the other; and all this to extort from the World an acknowledgment of his Sovereignty and Providence, and to prevent inſolence in the higheſt Condition, or Deſpair in the loweſt. Need I imprint this on your Minds by Inſtances; Shall I trace *Joſeph* from the Pit in the Wilderneſs, to the next place to *Pharaoh* on the Throne; *Moſes* from his Ark of Bulruſhes to the Ark of the Tabernacle, where he ſpoke with God face to face; or the Son of *Jeſſe* from his Crook, to his Scepter: or ſhall I on the other hand, ſhow you the great *Aſſyrian* Monarch boaſting that he had dried up the Rivers of beſieged places with the ſoles of his Feet,

and threatning to cut down all the tall Cedars of *Lebanon*, with ſuch like vaunts, and then in a moment a Bridle put into his mouth, and a Hook into his noſtrils, and falling a Sacrifice in the houſe of his Idols? *Antiochus* breathing fire and ruin in his rage againſt *Jeruſalem*, and then the next moment ſtruck with a Diſeaſe, tumbled down headlong from his Chariot, and become the object of ſcorn and pity; his flatterers could not bear his ſtench, nor himſelf his pain. 'Twere endleſs to multiply Examples, not Sacred Hiſtory only, but Prophane too abounding in them. Hence it is that the notion of an uncontroulable Providence univerſally poſſeſſed Mankind, Sacrifice and Prayer, Humiliation and Thankſgiving, were as frequent in the Pagan, as once in the Jewiſh, or now in the Chriſtian World. Hence it is, that good men have expreſſed ſo much confidence and ſecurity amidſt a crowd of Dangers. For this is the natural Reſult of an aſſured Intereſt in the Divine Favour; the Exultancy of *David* ſeems to be the language of every righteous man, *The Lord is my light and my ſalvation, whom ſhall I fear; The Lord is the ſtrength of my life, of whom ſhall I be afraid: ----when the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes,*

came

came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an hoast should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war should raise against me, in this would I be confident, Psal. 27. 1, 2, 3. How lively a Notion doth this give us of the happiness of a righteous man; His Mind enjoys a Calm in that Storm which threatens his Life and Fortune. His Soul possesseth it self in Security and Peace amidst the Alarms and Dangers of War: happy surely is the man whose heart is thus established; others may be politick, this man alone is wise; others may be fortunate, this man alone is great. He's an imperfect Image of that God he trusts in; that God, who even when he makes *Darkness his Pavilion, and thick Clouds round about him*, is all Light himself; and in the midst of Lightnings and Thunders, Storms, Tempests, and Earthquakes, he's himself serene, calm, and undisturbed. But against all this it will be objected by some, We readily acknowledge the Power of God; we believe too that Righteousness entitles Man to his Favour; but, after all, this is not a sufficient ground of the Confidence you talk of; for you must acknowledge too, that notwithstanding the Power of God, notwithstanding

his regard for good men, the righteous man doth very often, not only ſuffer, but periſh in his righteouſneſs; and the wicked man doth prolong his life in his wickedneſs, and preſerve and increaſe what he calls his Glory, by his Crimes and Villanies. To this I anſwer, This doth indeed ſometimes happen; but this will not much diminiſh the comfort of a righteous man, if what I have ſaid before concerning his Support and Reward be well weighed; or if we conſider,

4ly, That God will certainly do what is beſt for thoſe that ſerve him, and truſt in him. The diſpenſations of Providence towards ſuch ſhall ever be ſeaſonable, ever beneficial: If Afflictions be neceſſary, theſe ſhall be their Portion. If Proſperity be uſeful, they ſhall have it, when they are prepared for it, when they are fit to enjoy it: for God's goodneſs is governed by unerring Prudence, and his Power influenced by infallible Wiſdom. How great a Comfort, how great a Bleſſing is this to a poor Creature, who hath ſo ſhort a proſpect of things to come, and ſo little an inſight into the preſent: Let us then but renounce our ſins, let us but do good and truſt in God, and then come what Events, what

Times

Times will, all things ſhall work together for our good; what is, or what ſhall be, is that which ſhould be. Doth the Trumpet ſound an Alarm to War, War is beſt; muſt Factions and Diviſions embroil a State, even theſe like Thunder and Lightning ſhall but render the Air more clear, ſerene, and wholſome: *Sion* ſhall be redeemed with Judgment, and her Converts with Righteouſneſs, if it cannot be otherwiſe. But if another kind of Fortune, if Calm times, Succeſs, and Victory, be the things which the Glory of God, and the Intereſt of his People require, theſe ſhall not be denied us neither. In a word; The Commiſſion of God to the Prophet *Iſaiah* is, I think, the ſtanding Commiſſion given to every Preacher of the Goſpel in all times, let it be fulfilled in what ſence God thinks fit; *Chap.* 3. 10, 11. *Say ye unto the righteous that it ſhall be well with him, for they ſhall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked, it ſhall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands ſhall be given him.*

This minds me of the third and laſt thing propos'd:

3dly,

3dly, That is, to conclude all with an Exhortation to Righteouſneſs. That God is the only Support againſt Evil, I have fully proved; and the wicked themſelves diſown it not; for in the day of their diſtreſs, *they* too ſeek the Lord: and nothing is more ſuperſtitious in Adverſity, then ſuch as are careleſs and confident, irreligious and prophane in Proſperity; that Righteouſneſs alone entitles Man to the Favour and Patronage of God, and warrants his confidence in him, I need not prove. This is the voice of Nature, the voice of the Law and the Prophets; and the Goſpel is ſo far from cancelling it, that it multiplies our Obligations to Righteouſneſs. I will not therefore needleſly inſiſt on the proof of this Propoſition, but will in a word or two tell you, what I mean by Righteouſneſs, and then ſhow you how proper and becoming, how indiſpenſable and neceſſary the practice of it is this day: By Righteouſneſs I mean, in the Sinner, Repentance and Reformation, *a ceaſing to do evil, and a learning to do well.*

In the Regenerate I mean faithfulneſs, vigilance, and activity more then formerly in their ſtation, an abounding this day more then at other times in the works of God, and an increaſe

increaſe of zeal for his glory; how ſeaſonable, how becoming is this in the preſent Juncture of Affairs; ſhall we who have on all occaſions expreſſed ſo much tenderneſs for our Laws and Rights, contemptuouſly violate God's, and openly inſult his Authority? ſhall we, who defend the Proteſtant Religion with our Swords, deſtroy it by our Lives? ſhall we, who profeſs a zeal for the Liberty of *Europe*, be ſo far from expreſſing any for true Chriſtian Liberty, as not only not to contribute what lyes in our power to the breaking the yoke, and ſhaking off the tyranny of Hell from the neck of others, but alſo tamely to ſubmit our own to it?

Nor is this Righteouſneſs more becoming, then it is indiſpenſable and neceſſary; for without this what are we to expect? God ſeems to have moved out of his place, and to have a Controverſie with *Europe* this day; our neighbour Nations drink deep of the Cup of his Wrath, and ſhall we eſcape without Repentance? Are our Vertues ſo perfect, as not to need Chaſtiſements? or our Vices ſo few, or ſo ſmall, as not to call for Judgments? 'Tis therefore high time to begin the Work of Reformation, and to ſacrifice the Sacrifices of Righ-

Righteouſneſs, and then we may put our truſt in the Lord. But inſtead of this we are apt to flatter our ſelves with I know not what; that Religion is profeſſed amongſt us in its purity; that it 'twas ſown and cultivated in the Blood of Martyrs; that God will awake for his own ſake, and his Truths ſake, and plead our Cauſe, and that of Religion, with his and our Enemies. But may I not ſay to you as the *Baptiſt* did to the *Jews*, on a like occaſion, when the Ax was laid to the root of the Tree, *Think not to ſay in your ſelves we have* Abraham *to our Father; verily I ſay unto you, God is able of theſe ſtones to raiſe up children unto* Abraham. Though Earthquakes ſhould ſink this Iſland into the Sea, yet the Church of Chriſt ſhould ſtand upon a Rock, and the Gates of Hell ſhould not prevail againſt it; and ſhould this whole Nation turn Atheiſts or bigotted Papiſts, yet would God never want ſuch who ſhould worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth. If ever God could have been influenced by reſpect of Perſons, ſurely it muſt have been towards the Jews; and yet how often, and irrecoverably too at laſt, was *Jeruſalem* laid deſolate, and that by the Idolatrous and Impious Heathen too? *Jeruſalem* the

the Seed of *Abraham*, the Mother of Prophets, and once the reſidence of God himſelf, when he dwelt between the Cherubims, on the Mount of *Sion*.

But you will ſay, We reſt not here, we acquieſce not in any pretenſions to extraordinary Priviledges, above other Nations; but we offer up to God Faſting and Prayer, and ſet apart days of Solemn Humiliation. 'Tis very well: But I muſt put you in mind, that Repentance muſt be joyned with Faſting, and Reformation with Prayers, or elſe this will avail us little. 'Tis plain from ſeveral places in the Prophets, that the Jews were an hearing, praying People, at the ſame time when they were a diſobedient one too; that they wearied God with their Sacrifices and their Faſts, at the ſame time that they wearied him with their ſins too. And how God reſented this, the Prophet *Iſaiah* teacheth us, *Chap.* 1. 13. *Bring no more vain Oblations, Incenſe is an abomination to me; the new Moons and Sabbaths, the calling of Aſſemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even your ſolemn Meetings.* But will not the Prayers of righteous men avail much? They will: I would to God they were more, and that they were more united.

But we have Prayers againſt Prayers, and Faſts againſt Faſts, as if we were come to that laſt and worſt ſtate of *Jeruſalem*, when Jeſus Chriſt himſelf could do no more for it, then weep over it Tears of *Compaſſion* and *Deſpair: If thou hadſt known, even now at laſt, the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes*, Luke 19. 42. But were the Hearts and Prayers of the few Righteous this day one and the ſame, yet you know, there is a time when the Provocations of a People are grown to that height, that though *Noah*, *Daniel*, and *Job ſtood in the Gap and interceded, they ſhould ſave none but their own ſouls.* How far we are advanced towards this ſtate, or whether we are arrived at it, I dare not pretend to judge: Only I muſt ſay, we have great reaſon to fear it; when we conſider how many Judgments and how many Mercies have been loſt upon us.

And yet if this be our ſtate, we have one Refuge, one Comfort left us; that where Interceſſion cannot, Reformation will prevail; where Faſting and Humiliation will not be accepted, there Repentance and Righteouſneſs will.

This

This is evident from plain Scripture; for in the very ſame Chapter, *Ezek.* 14. wherein God affirms, that when he ſhall enter into Judgment with a Nation for its grievous Treſpaſſes, *Noah*, *Daniel*, and *Job* ſhould be able to ſave only their own Souls, by their *Righteouſneſs:* yet *verſe* 6. he exhorts the Jews to Repentance, as that which would be able to effect what *Noah*, *Daniel*, and *Job* could not. So *Jer.* xviii. 7,8. God tells us in ſo many words, *That at what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a Nation, or concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to deſtroy; if that Nation againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil I thought to do unto them.*

Let us then think every one upon our ways, and turn our Feet to the Teſtimonies of God; let us by Prayers and Tears, Repentance and Reformation, rout our Enemies, diſperſe our Fears, guard the Throne, and ſupport the Church: O that this might prove the bleſſed fruit of our ſolemn Faſts throughout the Nation this day, Reformation on our ſide, and Favour and Protection on God's!

I ſhould not then doubt, but that our Light ſhould break forth as the Morning, and our Health, or Salvation ſhould ſpring forth ſpeedily; Then ſhould Righteouſneſs, *i. e.* Deliverance, go before us, and the Glory of the Lord ſhould be our Reward; then ſhould we call and the Lord would anſwer, we ſhould cry, and he would ſay here I am.

Then ſhould Succeſs wait upon our Councils, and Victory upon our Arms; Peace ſhould be within our Walls, and Plenty within our Palaces; the Voice of Joy ſhould be heard in our Streets, and upon all, our Glory there ſhould be a Defence; and after all, all this ſhould be but the foretaſts of a more bleſſed State, and our *Canaan* but a pledge of Heaven. *Happy are the people that are in ſuch a caſe, yea bleſſed are the people who have the Lord for their God, Pſal.* 164. 15.

Now to God the Father, &c.

F I N I S.

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